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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the present training of Australian educators and the administrative organization of Australian public education and argues that the current system stresses the technical aspects of education while undervaluing the importance of personal relationships and communication skills for teachers. The author emphasizes the importance of teaching prospective educators what teaching is really about in the context of personal relationships and responsibilities; he compares the present approach to training doctors without introducing the concept of patient care or bedside manner. However, even if the preparation of teachers was changed to stress the establishment of student-teacher relationships as a precondition for effective learning, he suggests, the present centralized administrative structure of the Australian public schools is not conducive to the establishment and maintenance of such relationships. He concludes that unless real change occurs in the administrative structure, even the best-intentioned schools will be prevented from achieving optimum effectiveness. (JG)

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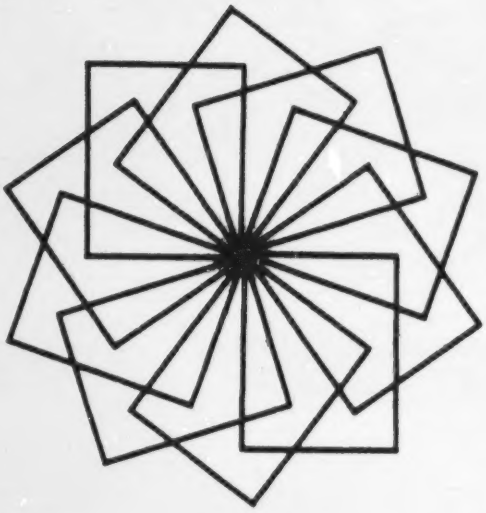

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"PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT"
SOME REFLECTIONS BY THE HEADMASTER OF AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION - CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

There is no way of avoiding, as far as I know, the process of acceleration from a standing start at the beginning of the delivery of any paper, and the gradual progress through the lower gears, inevitably rather tedious, is usually suffered without too much strain because of the recognition of this very inevitability. For me, the beginning must be the one set for me by Mac Grassie, and it is perhaps as good an arbitrary point of departure as any other. As I understand it from him, the prime function of this Conference is to examine the professional development of teachers from many points of view - both their training and preparation prior to employment and the prolonged process of the maintenance of their effectiveness as teachers throughout the period of their work in schools, the latter being seen as at least equally important as the former. In the days when I was Headmaster of Churchie, Mac Grassie made a very helpful contribution to the beginnings of what has now become so familiar, namely, programmes for in-service training, and it fell to my lot to be involved in the early implementation of some of those programmes. Because I have been headmaster of independent schools, Mac Grassie has been good enough to suppose that I might be able to contribute usefully to this Conference with an opinion from the school level about these questions of professional development. Perhaps a military analogy is not inept: if some of you represent - relatively speaking - Training Command, Headquarters Staff or the Army Education Corps, I represent perhaps a Battalion Commander in the field.

In my independent command there is no supply of teachers - I must find, by advertisement and through the agencies, those who are prepared to apply for positions and select from amongst them. Those teachers that make themselves accessible to me for appointment to my teaching staff are generally speaking well prepared from the point of view of knowledge, teaching skills, up-to-date teaching techniques, basic understanding of child behaviour and matters of that kind, but seem in some cases to have lost their way in the general area that I shall refer to as "relationship"; i.e., I find them less well-prepared or perhaps less well-disposed with regard to motivation, sense of vocation, sense of care and responsibility for the young, degree of generosity of attitude and enthusiasm for their commitment as teachers. Perhaps that list of attributes sounds to you somewhat other-worldly, a bit perhaps like playing The Anniversary Waltz in a discotheque, but I would presume to believe that leaders of our society - both within and without the educational field - would understand what I was getting at even if the words used might be different. In the course of a recent conversation with a senior administrator of one of the State Departments of Education, I was left in no doubt that he was aware of this problem, felt it to need urgent attention and was prepared to put forward a quite radical proposal for a solution. Certainly the parents and students of one Victorian High School would understand because their teaching staff had already been on strike five times before half-term. As the Conference theme is professional development it will be seen as proper, without attempting a definition of professionalism, to discuss attitudinal aspects of being a professional rather than technical aspects.

I am enormously concerned lest anything that I say appear to make unwelcome comparisons between the comparatively small number of independent schools and the very large number of schools that belong to State Education Departments. In three States in Australia, I

have maintained close and good relationships with the Principals of High Schools and senior administrators, have many friends amongst them, and have very much admired the work that they have been doing in and for their schools, so that it would be very far from my intention to imply criticism of schools whose authority, ownership and administration differ from my own, however it would be a foolishness not to comment objectively about these differences, because presumably I have been invited to contribute to the Conference for the very reason that my experience has been amongst this different fraction of schools. Nor am I unaware of the wide range of educational provision and responsibility accepted by Departments of Education that fall outside the province of a single school, the requirement to provide equitably for all those with special needs geographical or personal. However, those who make a study of educational administration do often compare and contrast dependently and independently governed schools and do so without offence to either: I cannot aspire to their position of neutrality but will certainly try to prevent my involvement prejudicing objectivity. I read a paper recently by that doyen of the study of educational administration, Professor Bill Walker, in which he explained an idea originally suggested by Richard Carlson of the University of Oregon, as follows:

"Independent schools, which may select their clients as they wish, and which clients may select as they wish - he classifies as wild: government schools, which must accept all who seek to enter them, and which for most people must be attended, he classifies as domesticated. The wild organisations are not protected at vulnerable points as are the domesticated organisations which, like the domesticated animal, are fed, cared for and protected by the society they serve".

I am happy to be numbered amongst the wild ones, and do not see domesticated status as necessarily conducive to health. The whole analogy leads my frivolous mind astray - the bull on free range must look forward to life with greater zest, and some of the inhabitants of domesticated pastures run the risk of artificial insemination. But enough of such pleasantries!

Beneath the academic humour of the analogy, the author of the paper seemed to feel that it had something real to say about schools - that they are lively creatures - those of us who have never removed ourselves from schools need no convincing about this reality - we cannot escape the human animal day by day, nor wish to do so. One of the significant features of administration in independent schools is that it is all done in the schools, and the administrator's day is invaded by direct human, personal events (you will certainly have heard of the Headmaster who explained that it wasn't the interruptions that made his work difficult but the interruptions to the interruptions). The worst part of my day is the struggle to reduce the piles of paper on my desk, the best part the interaction with the students, a considerable proportion of whom I know and greet by name in spite of the effort required to do so, and I would be ashamed if I could not. Human affairs reduced to figures and statistics remote from the humanity with which they deal become inevitably de-humanised, and it can make little difference administratively in a central office whether one's job is to count up school children or exports. If this seems an extreme comment, I can tell you that I have recently been reading a book about organisational behaviour in schools that never, never once in all its 246 pages, refers to the students. There is discussion and

analysis of administrators, principals, teachers, inspectors and so forth, but an interplanetary reader would be unable to discover whether these things called 'schools' were concerned with sheep or sausages. I am reduced to paralysis by a discussion as to whether a school is "idiographic - transactional - nomophetic" or "upward - mobile - indifferent - ambivalent" if such a discussion is so de-humanised that it can positively discount that the real topic is school students and their upbringing. Bill Walker's paper, from which I have quoted, is very properly well-laced with quotations and authorities: being fully engaged day by day at what is called, I believe, the work-face, I cannot emulate his scholarly style. Possibly in deciding to examine this question of "relationship", I put myself outside the realm of scholarship - you will find no bibliography at the end of this paper - and must run the risk of exposing personal feelings and opinions. In consequence, you may the more readily penetrate my arguments with comment or criticism, but I shall rest content if I can arouse you to that extent.

As an exercise in scene setting, I must explain a little more about my present school. All independent schools take pleasure in variations and ideosyncrasies, but Geelong Grammar School more perhaps than most: it is a co-educational school covering every level from Kindergarten to Matriculation distributed upon four sites, two of which are on either side of Geelong, one in the middle of Melbourne and one in far north-eastern Victoria, of which the main school at Corio and Timbertop are deliberately residential schools. Because three-quarters of the students at Corio are wholly residential, the remaining quarter that attends day by day is required to adapt to the residential way of life rather than vice versa, and therefore if they wish to come to this particular school must agree to spend a whole school day of about twelve hours at school, following a routine and a regimen that is essentially devised and designed for the resident population.

Clearly, the "relationship" between staff and students in this school, particularly at Timbertop and Corio, is and must be quite different from that in a day school situation. Unquestionably residential schooling is a valid and significant alternative form of schooling, and it is good that it can be made available as a matter of choice for those who select it or prefer it for whatever reason, but it requires that the school accept for the students a responsibility that can be fairly described as quasi-parental. Just as parents accept responsibility for their children all the time and from every point of view, so must we for the students: it is simply not possible to define in the manner of awards or logs of claims what in practical terms the acceptance of this responsibility will incur from day to day. Of course, some broad commitments can be so defined - numbers of teaching periods, numbers of days on duty, and so forth - but nevertheless there remains a great deal beyond that defies tidy categorisation.

In procuring and appointing my own staff for the four parts of the school I have occasion, therefore, to enquire fairly deeply into the questions of vocation, motivation and commitment. I have the exacting but essential task of finding and appointing my own staff, a staff which must understand and maintain the whole programme and characteristic of the school that I determine for it and which I must determine in such a way as to earn sufficient commendation that the school will survive the rigours of the market place in competition with others for whose services the immediate price is

zero. In interviewing those who apply to me, therefore, I declare that it is no use discussing the possibility of appointment unless the applicant perceives the nature of the relationship and is prepared to make the necessary personal and professional commitment required for this particular way of life. It is at this point that I lose contact with some applicants although perhaps contrary to your expectations I do consistently find a supply of people who positively wish to make an unusually deep commitment and who value the chance for greater involvement and closer relationship.

At a meeting some years ago when Mac Grassie was speaking to us about in-service education, he summarised some of the reasons that have been - or could be - those reasons that justify a place in the whole educational spectrum for independent schools, and this is his list in brief form:

(i) that many of them base their life on a deliberate religious foundation;

(ii) that they get good academic results;

(iii) that they supposedly supply a social cachet;

(iv) that they can cope with a proportion of children in some difficulty with their education; or,

(v) that they are innovative.

Indeed, at that time Mac Grassie suggested that these schools could only justify their place if they did use their independence to be innovative, but that is a question that I could debate another time. It is time, however, that independent schools do permanently represent what could be described as an innovation by their very constitutional situation of being independent, that this makes them different - a valuable control group within the whole of educational provision and one that should be valued by the whole for this very reason. I think one of the most potent reasons for people continuing to buy the service provided by independent schools is simply that people have never liked buying a 'pig in a poke', and like to know just what they are going to get by involving their children with a particular school, and this not by any means only in terms of content, method, morals, religious instruction, behaviour, and so forth, but mostly in terms of known people, the staff, so that they can feel confident about sharing their undoubted responsibility for the proper upbringing of their children with particular people that they know something about. Many schools publish programmes or prospectuses about what is or is not done within the school, but it is of the essence for an independent school to do so, and thereafter to ensure absolutely the maintenance of that programme: there will be an expectation at least (if not a requirement) of common ground between parent and school with regard to behaviour, morals, manners - quite apart from content, both curricular and co-curricular - together with a knowledge of proven personalities amongst the on-going teaching staff of the school. Of course, teaching staff must change from time to time, but it is the responsibility of the Principal of an independent school to see that nevertheless the kind and quality of the teaching staff is maintained, and that changes are not too frequent otherwise the patrons will not retain their confidence in the school. This does, of course, throw a very heavy responsibility on the Principal, and I suppose the

periods of greatest uncertainty amongst the patrons of a given school arise at those times when the Principal himself, or herself, changes; but the exercise of this responsibility is essential to the establishment and maintenance of the whole fabric of relationships that makes the school sufficiently effective to endure.

RELATIONSHIP AS ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATION

I am laying this stress on relationship because the process of education is an exercise in communication; whether it is concerned with the transfer of knowledge from person to person, the exploration of new ideas, or the development of acceptable social responses, communication is of the essence. Furthermore, effective communication is dependent on the prior establishment of a relationship. The mere transmission of knowledge or advice or instruction, and so forth, does not and cannot necessarily imply reception. Believing that effective communication is dependent upon relationship, I must explore the pre-conditions necessary for the establishment of those relationships that are conducive to effective communication. I would suggest the following:

In the best circumstance - affection or, at least, liking; or respect or trust: furthermore, an affectionate relationship produces an acceptance of responsibility.

At worst - an alternative would be fear, but this properly we would reject.

Consequently, disaffection with schools or schooling arises when affection or caring is not made apparent. The establishment of affection in turn requires a sense of security, continuity of association, community of interest, shared objectives, and the freedom to choose whether or not to establish or to maintain the relationship.

Believing these things to be true, then two things would seem to be necessary:

1. That teachers be positively prepared to understand these things; and,

2. that thereafter the organisation of schools and within schools should allow and encourage the development of these attributes.

TEACHER EDUCATION AS CONCERNED WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONSHIP

Without a sufficient basis of knowledge, I can only risk an opinion that teacher-training does not emphasise these essential elements - either before or during service as a teacher. Training does seem properly to ensure sufficient knowledge or skill, it does explore generalities about children - in the study, for example, of child psychology or sociology - and it does investigate techniques such as curriculum planning, classroom practice, audio-visual methods of presentation, and so forth, but to avoid or even at times to shy away from the question of relationships. In my own dealings with students, I seem not to meet situations that fit tidily into the general patterns that books are written about, and in dealing

with difficulties day by day one has, I believe, to become a master of the particular rather than the general, of the practical rather than the theoretical, and the acquisition of this mastership is a function of relationship. Were it my responsibility to train teachers, I would require that one integral school year was spent under instruction at a given school finding out what teaching is really about in the context of relationships and responsibilities.

We are all well aware, in Queensland particularly, of the nexus between evaluation, content and method in the educational process. Examiners can only assess the examinable and the examinable must be taught in a particular way to make examination success likely. Education as a whole ignores the affective and concentrates on the cognitive which can to a fair degree be quantified and measured: teacher education does so, teachers enter training as a result of success in an evaluation of cognitive skills, teachers become qualified on the basis of cognitive skills and thereafter, with no judgment made of their affective qualities, are posted to schools, the Principals of which do not have the authority to choose or to reject.

It is also true, I think, that in teacher-training institutions, a similar social pattern is set to that followed in most universities; viz, that academic staff choose deliberately not to place themselves in a relationship of responsibility or care for students, or for groups of students, or for their particular welfare. There has been a general fear of accepting responsibility for others, any others, since a proportion of the community lost faith in itself, its standards, its ethics, its achievements, preferring to offer the young the insecurity of often spurious freedom and this must sadden all those for whom in even the most general way the christian ethic remains the basis of their philosophy. There seems not to be anything comparable to the collegiate life of the older universities in Europe, in which a particular tutor took general responsibility for the welfare and conduct of a given group of students which was at least avuncular if not parental, consequently the organisation - or non-organisation - of teachers' colleges in itself educates those who are members of the institution to assume that non-involvement, non-relationship is the right environment for the teaching/learning process. A large proportion of young teachers would acknowledge that the periods of practical training in schools were the most valuable part of their preparation for teaching, these experiences provide some bridge between the theoretical and the practical. However, even the organisation of these "teaching rounds" tends to emphasise the idea that the teaching/learning process is rightly conducted on a basis of non-relationship. Trainee teachers spend only a few weeks at a school at a time, much emphasis is placed on the lessons themselves (preparation, presentation, content, etc.), but no emphasis can be given to knowing or understanding the students themselves. This may be a valid training experience for instructors but is misleading as a preliminary experience for would-be educators.

Professor Enns of the University of Alberta has written:

"Learning is active and individual. It takes place only when the individual is ready and when he is motivated. The individual can be helped to learn, but it is doubtful if he can be 'taught' very much. Thus, learning can best take place in an atmosphere of stimulation, freedom from restrictive influences and in a psychologically supportive climate - good teaching in this sense requires great skill, sensibility, adaptability and flexibility. It depends upon intimate, subtle interaction between teacher and learner".

That is to say as a consequence of the prior establishment of relationship - what else can 'intimate' infer?

If all this is - at least in some measure - so, then to seek a new analogy it is a bit like training doctors without introducing the concept of patient care or the bedside manner - an antiseptic methodology. I wonder if you are strong enough not to experience a degree of fear on being required to enter a hospital. I am sure we would all be confident that the level of technical care and the sense of responsibility for us would be very high, but we know that on admission there will be to an extent an abandonment of identity and individuality, and certainly a considerable loss of the capacity to decide anything for oneself; and if these feelings arise, it is not infrequently the reassurance and friendliness of the least highly qualified - the porter or the wardmaid or the nurse - that gives us comfort. I think the young often feel much the same about school and for perhaps much the same reasons. Discussions about the bases for disaffection with schools and schooling at present seem usually to focus on the possibility that the content is insufficiently relevant or that there are deficiencies of method, whereas, I believe, it could well be that the strongest reason is deficiency in relationship. If there is a mechanism for choice of school then when disaffection occurs a change of school environment can often be effective, but if an alternative isn't possible the only solution viable to the disaffected is to drop out of schooling altogether. If you can imagine yourself as a child approaching school, would your feelings not be very dependent on whether there was going to be somebody there who not only recognised you but who had known you for a reasonably prolonged period of time, and had demonstrated to you the extent to which you were a person of value in their sight. If I were now asked for a prescription for teacher training by one with responsibility in this field, I would confess that affective qualities have largely to be caught and not taught. Some counselling about relationship could take place but commitment, motivation, vocation are learnt more by example than precept. I do think it's a pity that so many teachers are prepared in isolation, and I would see it as better for would-be teachers to learn their academic or technical skills in open tertiary institutions and thereafter to be educated to be teachers. As I have already said, I would want one year of such teacher education to be right in the school situation and much of the more theoretical work would gain in value if it was offered after some experience in school. Now that the demand for more teachers has abated, perhaps we could examine the sequence followed by so many of school to teaching college and then back to school. Does this have sufficient breadth of experience for the profession of teaching?

ORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS AS CONCERNED WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

Even if stress was laid during the preparation of teachers on the questions of establishment of relationships as pre-conditional for effective learning, there would still be another problem, that of ensuring that the organisation and administration of schools was conducive to this establishment and maintenance of relationships. I must, therefore, cautiously make some comment about the administration of schools.

There are two prime philosophies of administration as I perceive them - the centralist and the peripheralist.

The centralist mode of administration depends for its function on certain beliefs:

1. That those appointed to positions at the centre will be wiser, better informed and more understanding of the needs of the system than those within the system at the periphery; and,

2. that efficiency will improve by gathering and holding at the centre two sources of power - information and money.

It is also true that a centralist mode once established develops a powerful momentum and tends to maintain itself even if efficiency declines, or is seen to decline, because it then becomes important to hold on to the power of information and money in order to preserve status and position. Those who incline to the centralist view usually exhibit an attitude that could, kindly, be described as paternalistic. All centralised bureaucracies must by their nature tend towards authoritarianism, for democratic solutions require a great faith not in administrators but in people, a lot of people, even people who may seem to be "ordinary" or relatively ill-educated.

The peripheralist mode on the other hand believes that:

1. Those at the periphery are just as likely to be wise and well-informed as those at the centre, but will be far more likely to be aware of, and understanding of, needs as they arise;

2. that efficiency will decline by deferring through bureaucratic devices, information and funding to the centre; and,

3. that consequently for optimum functioning in any system central services - which are undoubtedly necessary - should be made subordinate in importance to those involved in the direct implementation of the function of the system at its periphery.

Some of the consequences of centralism in educational administration as they affect teachers, and in particular the capacity of teachers to establish relationships will, I think, be recognised as including the following:

1. There is no one in particular, or no one accessible to the teacher, to whom he or she can relate and respond as the direct employing authority.

2. Although School Principals have considerable and increasing freedom of action, they are nevertheless set about and encompassed by a great deal of external regulation and restraint, and thus are not seen to possess a sufficient intrinsic authority in their own situation: for example, they do not possess the authority to appoint or to reject teaching staff.

3. The existence of a macro-employing authority generates inevitably as its opposite number a macro-employee organisation; and, therefore,

4. the prime loyalty of teachers will often be to either the teaching service as a whole and progress within it, or to an association or union of teachers. In my old-fashioned way, I believe that the prime loyalty of teachers should be to the children they teach, and to the parents of those children with whom they share the responsibility of the upbringing of the young.

   Furthermore, shared loyalty within a school depends for its full realisation on the voluntary nature of the association, and this is inhibited if parents and teachers do not have a choice of school; if parents as the patrons of schools are to choose a school and to support it loyally, then the school programme must not only be decided and published and adhered to - both curricular, co-curricular and latent - but must possess in the person of the Principal a degree of autonomy that includes responsibility for staffing. I cannot see that a School Principal can give any real guarantee about the programme of his school if he is not able, at least, to retain on his staff some members whom he sees as being particularly important, and able to reject from amongst those allocated to the school any that he finds incompatible with its determined and declared intentions.

Centralism tends to produce discontinuity of teaching staff, dispersion of loyalties and limitations of parental choice and decision, all of which inhibit optimum relationship and thus optimum effectiveness.

Now I know very well that the risk that centralism may impair relationships required for effective education in schools is understood: to quote Bill Walker again -

"The key characteristics of bureaucracy - specialisation, complexity and impersonality may be the very characteristics which are most inimical to the rather subtle, personal, affective classroom situations which Professor Enns and I are seeking";

and,

"Chris Argyris hypothesises that the needs of the individual and the demands of formal organisations are basically incompatible".

In pursuit of this understanding, deliberate steps have been taken in various States to prolong the tour of duty of Principals within a school, to regionalise administration, to restrain postings of teachers from school to school and so forth, but these are seen, I believe, as palliatives within a system which must itself be maintained for other reasons in spite of some regrettable side effects. Being outside the system, I take a contrary view and believe the benefits of centralised administration not to be sufficient to offset the regrettable side effects.

Psychologists have explained to us - particularly with regard to the upbringing of children - the effects of the double-bind where the words that are spoken are directly contradicted by the physical

action or physical posture or tone of voice of the speaker: centralist administration in education produces such a double-bind. The proposition that education is what is undertaken - not instruction but education - is explained with every good and sincere intention, but the physical nature of the centralist administration itself simultaneously inhibits the effectiveness of the outcome.

PROPOSALS FOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE TO ENCOURAGE RELATIONSHIP

It is a remarkable thing that in the two areas of life that are most directly concerned with the upbringing of children the administrative philosophy adopted is precisely opposite. The upbringing of children depends, more than anything as we know, on the home and the family, and then, secondly, on the school. The administration of families is carried out on the peripheralist basis, power is distributed to the units at the periphery in the form of money, and parents and families are then enabled to patronise or purchase such goods and services as they see fit from amongst those provided both by private enterprise and by government. In countries and times when this was not so, but people were directly provided with food and accommodation, the situation was seen as being patronising and offensive, a hangover from colonial administration and something to be deplored. Imagine the reaction then that there would be were it proposed to set up a new Ministry of Domesticity, for which many very powerful arguments could be advanced perhaps: housing development could be much better controlled if families were directed to a particular house allocated for their use, tremendous cost savings on house improvements and decoration could be achieved by having a P.W.D. that did all this work as a government agency, purchasing could be centralised allowing bulk-buying, and furthermore by a careful selection from amongst householders, the Director-General of Domesticity and his immediate hierachy could be seen as having far better qualifications to lay down the general patterns of domestic life than individual householders. Why not registration of mothers and compulsory in-service education for fathers? If you thought momentarily - indeed why not? - then you may be addicted to centralism and our philosophies of life will hardly interract. Hopefully this is still a fantasy although the greater and greater intrusion of governments and government agencies into family life would occasion some doubts about this, but presently domestic administration is based on the peripheralist mode: however, as soon as we come to the other important part of the process of the upbringing of children, the mode of administration is swung abruptly and completely to the opposite extreme - and I find that a very extraordinary fact.

In some other western countries the management of schools is far more dispersed than it is in the States of Australia, so that I hold an opinion about the administration of schools that is not governed only by my own experience in independent schools. I believe that the transfer of real authority and real power in school education to the periphery - in part to local boards of parents and others, and in part to schools and School Principals - would revolutionise education in this country: far stronger, more effective relationships would arise as a result between the schools, the staff of these schools, and those children and parents of children to whom they directly relate. Centralism dampens idealism and encourages self-centred, or teacher-centred modes of

behaviour. Centralism encourages the belief that there is one process of education, whereas we should be thinking, and to some extent are thinking, in terms of educations, pluralism of styles and approaches. If the emphasis could be changed to give the greater recognition and authority to the schools themselves, or local groups of them, then the same central services as are presently provided would continue to be needed but would be subordinate to the units that they would provide for, and in consequence might be pleased to be entitled 'Departments Servicing Educations'.

Pseudo-devolution is to my mind no good: the leopard will not change its spots by regionalising them. There may well be policy already made to transfer more authority gradually to regional or local boards, but the range of matters for which local boards can exercise responsibility presently avoids the main educational areas of school programme and staffing. The Director General in Victoria spoke with pride recently of the millions of dollars authority for the disposition of which had been delegated to School Councils, but in reply a commentator pointed out that such authority really only extended to educational trivia. This is probably the reason why it is proving difficult to arouse local response, notional delegation while the real authority over the kind of education and the staffing of schools is retained at the centre may be seen as a pretence. Why are governments so afraid of giving real authority to local school boards? In the field of local government there is a regular supply of thoughtful and responsible people ready to act as City or Shire Councillors, and they manage in some cases multi-million dollar businesses with care and imagination: why then is there any doubt that school boards could be equally responsible? Indeed it is a sad confession of failure that educators after decades of schooling are left with the belief that the key management of today's education cannot be delegated to those who are the products of all the education imparted over the generations.

If power was dispersed to the periphery, then School Principals and their staff would become more important figures in education than administrators. At least a proportion of able, senior professionals presently engaged in administration might still be in the schools. The leaders of schools by conferring together would set the requirements from central servicing agencies for teacher supply, materials, syllabus, research, and so forth. Papers presented about educational change by theorists usually identify parents and School Principals as inhibitors of change, and imply that changes that are necessary and desirable in their view must be pressed into action from academics and administrators downwards through the system. In my view, academics and advisors should have the job of educating people, parents and principals and teachers and students about their ideas which would thereafter be implemented from the bottom upwards only if the consumers accepted and wanted the change. After all, in my hierachy the most lively minds and fertile intellects would be in the schools. Certainly professionals must devise the curriculum and school programmes, and certainly it is possible for them to exercise some leadership in doing so, but the local community through its representatives should be able to discuss it and comment on it, and it is not good leadership to leave one's regiment too far behind.

Certainly in this "Through the Looking-Glass" world the financial reward to principals and others in schools would need to be enhanced, special incremental allowances would have to be paid to those who were prepared to give continuous effective service in a particular school (the receipt or otherwise of which would have to be at the discretion of the School Principal), and the salaries of those running the service organisations would need to be kept in proportion to their role.

All this doubtless seems such a remote possibility and your mind is probably full of so many counters and rebuttals that perhaps you don't believe that it could happen, or that schools could manage to run effectively in this way; but in that case it is necessary to explain away independent schools. These schools function without belonging to the lower layers of a pyramidal hierachy of administration. Decision is prompt and local and vital, relationships are positively fostered and maintained and can be so maintained between Principal and staff, staff and pupils, staff and parents, and between all other parts of the interlocking fabric of relationship that makes up the whole. I don't accept that any educational administration need be done above the level of schools, financial and property administration perhaps, but educational - no. Any administration directly affecting the people in the system ought not to be done out of contact with them. External supporting and advisory services - of course - but that is a different relationship.

I cannot see that independent schools are in any sense a threat to democracy or to egalitarianism, but on the other hand, as I have said, they represent a continuing experimental group functioning in comparison with the control group of State-provided education, and therefore provide valuable, experimental evidence. What useful indicators can be derived from the fact of the demand for their services? Democracy which should ideally provide citizens with a maximum capacity for exercising choice and decision in all matters day by day (and not by any means only in the infrequent elections for governments) would be well served if independence within reasonable limits, local responsibility and local decision-making could be given to schools owned by the State and if a high degree of real choice of school was given to parents. Those schools that are chosen by their patrons do possess the prerequisites for the establishment and maintenance of affectionate relationships, and to my mind this is the chief factor governing their effectiveness.

In the past, efforts have been made to use schools and education to make people equal or less unequal and that sufficient spending on schools in socially handicapped areas might lead to greater equality of outcome: inherited factors as well as environmental disadvantage will always lead to people being unequal, but schools as one of the environmental factors should try to offset differences and not exacerbate them. If one agrees with the main thrust of this thinking there can still be differing views about the best action to take. I believe that choice of schools for parents in situations of socio-economic handicap would be a powerful instrument for good involving the whole family unit in the motivation for progress, decision about this and the need to support the decision thereafter. While it might be very hard to create responsible interaction between school and community in some social situations, it would be tremendously worth striving for because a successful outcome could have an effect well beyond the children in the school themselves.

I don't think it unfair to have wandered into this realm of educational administration at a very broad level, nor to have come close to making a political proposition. Nothing I have said can be taken to imply that there are not many idealistic teachers, nor many effective schools maintaining imaginative programmes, indeed it is because there are so that I believe this is where trust can be placed and the likelihood of an increase in effectiveness realised. My thesis is simply that unless real change is brought about in the administrative structure, then with the best will in the world schools will still be prevented from achieving optimum effectiveness. If the professional training of teachers dealt deliberately with the question of relationship as a prerequisite for effective communication, and explored the factors governing the establishment and maintenance of relationships in the setting of a school community so that these matters became integrated into their idealism, this would be made of null effect unless the organisation and administration of schools was devised positively to foster the expression of these ideals.

I could not, I'm afraid, work for any macro-organisation - it would be like trying to make love with a dinosaur. The fetters of organisational gigantism may yet enslave us all, but happily I am getting old enough to be able to remain a maverick content to have played some part in sustaining within certain schools those relationships, that continuity, that involvement and commitment without which communication cannot be maintained, and education be effective: were it not so, I would have had to pull out long ago.